



My Drift

Title: The Healer Stones of Kapaemahu

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Date: 15 Jul 2022

Article Number: (394-2022-15)



The Healer Stones of Kapaemahu (also known as The Wizard Stones or The Stones of Life) are located in the heart of Waikiki, right on the beach near the Duke Kahanamoku Statue behind the police substation, close to their original home in the section of Waikiki known as Ulukou.

The four stones were placed there as tribute to four legendary mahu (third-gender individuals) who brought the healing arts from Tahiti to Hawai'i centuries ago. It is also the name of the leader of the healers, who according to tradition (or legend), transferred their spiritual power to the stones before they vanished. Kapaemahu is considered significant as a cultural monument in Waikiki, an example of sacred stones and rocks in Hawai'i, an insight into indigenous understandings of gender and healing, and the subject of a recent animated film.

The two plaques that are mounted on the base of the platform tells the story of the stones in Hawaiian and English. I will tell you the story now.

These stones are said to contain the mana (power) of four wizards who came to Oahu from Tahiti a long time ago, possibly around 400 A.D. The wizards were tall in stature (over 7 feet tall), gentle in demeanor, and soon became admired and respected by the Hawaiian people. They helped the island residents by relieving their aches and pains and cured various diseases. Word about these healers spread quickly on the island.



According to this ancient legend, the four wizards named Kahaloa, Kinohi, Kapuni, and Kapaemahu possessed great healing powers. They settled in Waikiki near where today the Moana Surfrider hotel is located. Kapaemahu was the leader of the four and honored for his ability to cast aside carnality and care for both men and women. Kapuni was said to envelop his patients with his mana. While Kinohi was the clairvoyant diagnostician, Kahaloa— whose name means “long breath”—was said to be able to breathe life into her patients.

The art of healing they practiced is known in the Islands as la‘au lapa‘au. In this practice, plants and animals from the land and sea, which are known to have healing properties, are combined with great wisdom to treat the ailing. They gained fame and popularity because they were able to cure the sick by laying their hands upon them. They had the power to see inside a patient’s body to see the cancer tumors or whatever was wrong and fix it. They could also make the blind see again. Yes, they were miracle workers!





The wizards told the people that they didn't intend to stay on the island. Their intention was to heal, teach and share their knowledge before returning home. They gave the people instructions to build a monument in memory of their visit and the cures they had accomplished. This monument should consist of four large pōhaku (stones) and be located on the beach in Waikiki.



On a full moon night thousands of islanders met on the hill behind the neighborhood of Kaimuki (about two miles away from Waikiki Beach) to move four large basaltic stones, each weighing a ton or more (the largest stone weighed 10 tons), to the place where the wizards lived, as they had been instructed. Back then, Waikīkī was a marshland devoid of any large stones.



During a month-long ceremony, the healers are said to have transferred their names — Kapaemahu, Kahaloa, Kapuni and Kinohi — and their spiritual powers to the stones. Before the wizards left Hawaii, they told the people that they would endow these stones with their healing powers.

Today, these four stones are still there for people to see. They have been moved onto a platform and fenced in to protect and preserve them. Many visitors come to see the wizard's stones in Waikiki each day and some bring a flower lei to honor them.

But that's not the whole story! A lot of things happened to those sacred stones between the time the wizards left Hawaii and when the platform was built to protect them in Waikiki. Here is the rest of the story:

Over the hundreds of years that followed, the stones were mostly forgotten. They moved and were covered with sand and soil due to the shifting ocean tides, currents, and surf.



Archibold Scott Cleghorn & Princess Likelike



Princess Ka'iulani

Then around the year 1900, Archibold Scott Cleghorn, the Scottish husband of Princess Likelike (Miriam Likelike Kekāuluohi Keahelapalapa Kapili Kalākaua) and father of Princess Kaʻiulani, discovered two stones on his property and two on an adjacent property. Recognizing their significance, Cleghorn had them excavated and placed together on his estate. The princesses regularly placed seaweed offerings on them. When Cleghorn died in 1910, his will stipulated that the stones not be moved and must be protected, which didn't happen.



In 1941, a bowling alley was built on the site and the stones were used in the foundation, despite protests from the local Hawaiian community. After the structure was demolished in 1958, the stones were given some prominence in the newly created Kuhio Beach park. However, more indignities were to come. They were dug up yet again in 1980, so a sewer line and toilet could be built on the spot. Tourists began using them as a towel-drying rack, sparking more Hawaiian protests.



Legendary 'Wizard Stones' Are Restored At Waikiki

Four large rocks protruding through the sand at the recently restored section of Kuhio Beach, next to the SurfRider Hotel, were marked last week with a bronze plaque installed by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

The rocks, according to the plaque, are the "Wizard Stones of Kapaemahu." They were scarcely removed before vandals splashed them with red paint, now being removed.

Hawaiian legend says they were dedicated to four soothsayers who came to Oahu from Tahiti "long before the reign of King Kamehameha." The famous king of Oahu reigned in the sixteenth century, at about the time Queen Elizabeth was on the English throne.

BECAUSE OF their legendary interest, it was decided to retain the stones in the area. So as not to mar the landscape or interfere with the use of the beach, the stones are deeply imbedded in the sand.

In retaining the stones there, the Parks Department also fulfilled the wish of the late Governor A. E. Cleghorn, whose will, made in 1910, said, "It is my wish and I hereby direct that the historic stones on the premises shall not be defaced or removed."

The Cleghorn property was condemned by the City in 1938 for a public beach.

ACCORDING TO the legend, the names of the soothsayers were Kapaemahu, Kahaloa, Kapuni and Kinohi. They were tall, handsome, kindly and well spoken.

After a tour of the islands, they settled at Ulukou near the present site of the Moana Hotel. They became famous for their skill in the art of healing.

When the time came for them to leave, they asked for recognition in the form of four monumental tablets, two to be erected at the place of their abode and two at their usual bathing place in the sea.

SO FOLK large rocks were brought from the vicinity of the "hell rock," in Kaimuki.

Kapaemahu, chief of the wizards, had his stone engraved and transferred his powers to it. A virgin chieftess was sacrificed and her body placed beneath the stone. The other wizards also transferred their powers to the stones.

After the ceremonies, the wizards vanished and were seen no more.

The rocks were first unearthed in about 1907. It is said that Governor Cleghorn placed them where they had remained until recently unearthed.

Mrs. Mary Kawena Pukui, noted Hawaiian expert, and Mayor Blaisdell inspect the new plaque marking the Wizard Stones of Kapaemahu.

THE STONES WERE UN-

Finally, in 1997, a few committed individuals collaborated on plans to create a wahi pana (sacred place) where Na Pohaku (the stones) could be honored and protected. This site was restored with the Assistance of Papa Henry Auwae, the Queen Emma Foundation, and Honolulu Mayor Jeremy Harris.



Papa Henry Auwae (Master of the Hawaiian Art of Healing)

Henry Auwae learned the art of lā‘au lapa‘au (herbal medicine) from his grandmother, a woman whose knowledge extended back to nineteenth century Hawai‘i.

In addition to the many involved with the restoration, a delegation from Tahiti was present for the final ceremonies. These individuals blessed the stones with wild basil, traditionally used for cleansing, and presented a small stone from Tahiti named Ta‘ahu ea as a ho‘okupu (offering). That stone is now set on top of the altar in front of the Healer Stones of Kapaemahu.

Following the direction of Papa Auwae, four plants with medicinal value were added to the site—ma‘o (Hawaiian cotton), ‘ohe (bamboo), makahala (wild tobacco) and naupaka kahakai (beach naupaka).



There are those who say Wizard Stones have retained the mana imbued in them by the esteemed Tahitian visitors over 1500 years ago. To this day, locals make offerings to the stones – the leis you find draped over the fence posts, flowers laid on the altar, even small stones tossed respectfully inside the sacred circle – in the hope the stones still have the power to provide good health and long life.

For those of you that don't live in Hawaii, next time you visit Oahu and find yourself walking along Waikiki Beach, visit the Duke Kahanamoku statue, sure, but save a lei for the altar at Nā Pōhaku Ola (The Sacred Healer Stones). You never know!



To tell you the truth, I have lived in Hawaii since 1970 and just learned about these stones a couple of weeks ago while getting my hair cut. I'm getting old and have recently developed a few health issues so it might just be time for me to buy a lei and visit Waikiki.

Kapaemahu YouTube Video you can view (8 minutes and 50 seconds)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UO29QQm1-zM>

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